

SATURDAY, OCT. 28, 1871.

Subject: Lessons from the Great Chicago Fire.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

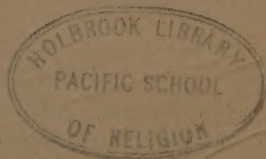
A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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LESSONS

FROM THE

GREAT CHICAGO FIRE.

“Thy judgments are a great deep.”—PSA. XXXVI. 6.

No wonder that the Hebrew found in the ocean a symbol of divine providence. The beauty of its gentler moods wins us as if the sea had in it only kindness. The storm bursts out; and the horrible conflict, the noise, the darkness, and the cruel power, overwhelm the imagination as if the ocean had in it only fate and torment. But it is the same ocean in the height of its rage, that it was in its tranquil moods. It has not broken away from law. It moves obediently to everlasting laws, as much when it dashes fleets to pieces or drowns thousands of men, as when it opens its bosom to feed nations, or becomes the common carrier of commerce around about the globe. God's providences *are* a great deep. When they smile, they seem to us indeed the providences of a loving God; but, when they bring a reign of misfortune and unmingled suffering, sometimes they seem demoniac providences. Joy and gladness seem to us rational, normal, explicable; but disaster we instinctively feel is unregulated action, and mysterious and bewildering.

We believe in divine and special providence, not as something separated from law, but as a mode of administering law. The whole system of laws under which the human race lives, is overruled and administered by God so that the great ends of human existence are served.

Natural laws were framed to work toward benefit; and it is strictly philosophical to say, “All things shall work together for good to them that love God.” But the common mistake lies in supposing that we can guess, in each particular event, what the divine intent was. It is not difficult to announce the general proposition that all things on earth will, in the economy of law, and supervised

by a special intelligent providence, tend to restrain evil, and to promote good. The general tendency men accept. The mistake lies in attempting to carry into specifics that which we may accept only generically.

The interpretations of providence are mostly the reasons of men's skepticism about providence. In a general sense, evil befalls men by reason of their sins—that is, by reason of violations of law which bring penalties. In a general sense, obedience to goodness brings appreciable benefit. But it is not wise, it is not practicable, to analyze one's life, and to determine that this or that special experience has come by reason of this or that act, or that it is sent for this or that special end in the future. The benefits which accrue to us are not on account of any special virtue; nor are the judgments and disasters which follow particular sins to be reckoned as specially aimed at those sins. Sometimes the connection between one's actions and his sins is very plain. We see that good does follow right conduct immediately, so that they are cause and effect; and we perceive that evil does follow wrong conduct, so that they are cause and effect. This is the case where drinking produces intemperance. There causes work, and produce, directly or indirectly, evil effects—evil dispositions, and a whole train of mischiefs.

But when we attempt to apply this to whole communities, the problems are so complex that we lose the clue, and can no longer follow in this specializing process. We believe, in a general way, that all the laws under which we live, and to which we yield an approximate obedience, inure to benefit. But they are so many, so subtle, and so interplied, woven, braided together, that we are unable to say where we broke or where we kept laws. We blot out the details.

We start on a a wrong line, therefore, when we inquire in regard to great histories, like the war, for instance, between Austria and Germany, or like the Franco-Germanic War, and say, "Why did God allow such tremendous evils?" To attempt to trace this or that particular, except in a limited and guarded way, is not philosophic. It transcends human power.

But it is fair and wise in all cases of providence—that is, in all great happenings—though we may not be able to ascertain the philosophy of them, or what the divine intent was, except in a very general way—it is wise, in all such cases, to ask, "Since such things have happened, what lessons of wisdom may we deduce from them?" It is wise to ask, not so much, "Why, particularly, were they sent;" as "What shall I do with them, now that they have come?" That is practicable. That belongs to our sphere. We may not say,

"Why did God bring so good a man to bankruptcy?" but when bankruptcy has come to a man who is so good, he may very wisely say, "What now, since I am a bankrupt, is that which is becoming in me as a man and a Christian? How shall I turn to good that which is exteriorly bad?" That is a wise way of dealing with providence. In short, it may be presumed that the divine thought moves in so large a sphere, includes in its range such immeasurable and innumerable elements, that to a lower mind it must needs be complex at all times, and at some times utterly unintelligible. It is impossible to interpret beforehand what were God's intentions; and the greatest wisdom is rather to interpret, as far as possible, from things that have happened, what is the line of particular duties.

There is much sympathy between lower animals and those that are higher. The most intelligent of animals, I take it, is the dog. He is the nearest to man. He is most in sympathy with him. He comes nearest to talking and to laughing. If some dogs do not want to laugh, then there is no truth in signs; and if some dogs do not try to talk, then there is no use of interpreting anything. How quickly they know whether you are angry or not angry, pleased or not pleased! How soon they know what is passing in your mind, in a general way! And they come to you, they go away from you, or they sit aloof from you, they demean themselves, according to the signs which they read in your face, and in your general conduct. No other animal but the dog can do that. Yet anything beyond that is utterly lost to him. How soon the clue is gone! How little can a dog understand more than just what your present feeling is toward him! Suppose he should believe that you were his God, and had a providence, and should attempt to have a theory of that providence, how long and how far do you think he could follow your thoughts?

Yet more pertinent, the child attempts to interpret the father. A very little way, and only a very little way, the child's mind can go. Beyond that the father's mind travels on and on, and the child is utterly helpless, and can only say, "I trust my father, but I do not understand him." We can trust God, but we cannot understand him. Not because he has wrapped himself in mystery; not because there is anything mysterious in the divine procedure in the ordinary understanding of that term *mysterious*; but simply because it is impossible for a lower formation to understand a higher one. Our minds were not meant to measure that sphere in which God dwells, and the scale of conduct in which he acts.

This, substantially, was the old Hebrew feeling. The Hebrews accepted God's government; they believed in it as a fact; they

pronounced it mysterious, but wound up by saying, "God is good. Clouds and darkness are around about his throne; but justice and judgment are the habitations thereof." And there they left it. There everybody else has had to leave it from that day to this; and there I suppose everybody will have to leave it from this day to the end of the world. We are not big enough to philosophize about God as a providence.

He must be bold indeed, therefore, who shall undertake to answer all the questions which must arise on the contemplation of that great disaster, or series of disasters, which has afflicted the Northwest. This destruction of a city utterly and almost instantaneously, is a kind of anachronism in history. It is the parallel of other great disasters which have been inflicted on cities and nations. It is like another Herculaneum or Pompeii, or the Apocalyptic vision of a *mountain of fire cast into a sea of blood*, it came so suddenly, so unpreparedly, and took us so unawares, astounding us, rather than interpreting itself to us. And we shall not dare to enter upon the interior of this disaster, and arrest Providence with this writ, "Why hast thou done this?" Why should such a scene of suffering befall that city rather than another? Why should the good and the bad suffer in common? Why should the frugal, the industrious, the skillful, who had organized law into wealth, and built up society, and done more to elevate the masses than any others, more heavily suffer than the thriftless, the idle and the vicious, who have nothing now, and who had nothing before? The poorer a man was, the less he suffered. The richer a man was, the wiser he was, the more virtuous he was, the more sensitive he was, the more he was spread abroad in wholesome prosperity,—the more scope was there for the bolt and the levin blast. Why should the innocent and the helpless, why should the gentle and brave women, why should the poor, clinging, little children, be chased toward the darkness at midnight by the pursuit of devouring flames? Why should the young wife who was just opening the door of life to her first-born be burned up with her child? And why was not the lover and husband burned too? Since she must go, why not both?

That jails should burn with vicious criminals, may not seem strange; but why should hospitals, with their precious burden of the sick and the poor, be burned? Why should dwelling-houses, with venerable age and helpless youth, be treated just as if they were the haunts of infamy? God's judgments *are* a great deep; and he who undertakes to pursue God's footsteps with inquisition, asking in each instance, "Why is this?" and "Why is this?" will soon find himself driven out on that deep. For there is no chart

and no compass that can steer him across it.

Such thoughts bewilder the brain and sour the heart. They are unwholesome. They are neither pious nor manly. They are not philosophic. Turn away from them. Turn from contemplating the case of the young man who, after incredible self-denial and toil, had just put his foot on firm foundations, and now in an hour finds himself cast out on the same level with the dissipated fellow who lived a parasitic life in society; turn from the contemplation of innumerable such cases; let them go their way. If you pursue them, that way lies atheism. Those things will not bear looking at in that way. Refuse to weave darkness. Are there no lessons of light? Are there no inquiries that will bring some degree of confidence in providence, trust in God, and rest toward men? Yes, a great many.

It is not for me, therefore, to dissect, to-day, and lay open, the horrors of that occasion. Enough we have suffered in dwelling upon them. Our eye is weary with tears. Our heart is tired with sympathy in distress. Let us comfort ourselves, and find, if we can, that wherein we may rest.

This great national disaster is a revelation of *the structure and function of cities in the organization of society*. Geographically, cities are distinct from the country at large; but they are organic parts of it, and are of transcendent importance. Morally, socially, and industrially, they are the supreme heads of the outlying country. They are the point at which the whole region round about expresses itself. Chicago is blotted out; but every city, and every town, and every village, and almost every family in the United States, feels the flash of that flame. What was Chicago? Not what it was in itself. Its secret threads, its nerve-filaments, ran out to the immediate neighborhood, to contiguous cities, to every state, to every part of the land, and to the whole world. There is scarcely a nation on the globe that has not some of the roots of Chicago in it. It was not isolated. As no man stands alone, but is what he is by virtue of ages going far back in the past; as no man stands alone, but transmits himself, reaching out, good and bad, through the coming time; as no man stands alone, but stretches his branches out wide over others, so, less, can a whole community of men stand alone, with complex industries, with all that is bred, and cultured, and wise, and keen, and intensely alive. It takes possession of the whole world. And every great city belongs as really to the whole world as to any part of it.

A great tree stands near our dwelling. It belongs to the immediate dwelling. It covers a hundred feet square of ground. Trace

its roots. They far outrun the spread of its branches. They plunge deep out of sight. They run along beneath the surface of walls, and seek richer soil. They follow the scent of water, and may be found drinking at a far-off brook. They go after the chemical richness in sewers, and nestle in other spots where those elements which make a better soil have accumulated. They fill the whole meadow full. And if you trace them to their uttermost bounds, they are very many times wider-spread than the branches.

So, if you trace out the life of a single city; if you follow to their termination all its sensitive nerves, it is not a separate thing. More is it to a nation, or to the world, like the head of the body. When one is in health he does not know that he has a nerve. He does not know that he has a drop of blood. He never feels either the one or the other. But just touch the brain, touch the heart, and they will reveal instantly the complexity of the organization. And there is no single part of the human system, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, that is not sensitive, because there is connected with the brain a nerve that ramifies there. Cities are the heads of the country. They are nerve-plexuses, vital congeries. They always follow civilization. As they produce it, they are produced by it. Civilization tends to globe itself up in such ways. And the prosperity of cities, their power, their moral wholesomeness, and their purity, are of transcendent importance.

Behold the instantaneous effects of the prostration of a single city in our land. See what a revelation is made of the importance of cities in the nation. Because St. Louis is so far from New York, she is not any the less a part of New York. Because San Francisco is so far beyond St. Louis, it does not follow that she does not belong vitally to the whole country. Shall the nerve in the cheek say to the nerve in the foot, "You are so far down that you do not belong to me"? Why, the nerves all belong to each other throughout the body. And every city in the whole land belongs to the whole land, and to every other city in the land; and the whole land is an organic unity. It is right and noble to spread over the globe commerce and wealth; but it is of more importance that New York should be a truly civilized and well-governed city, than that commerce and civilization and the ordinary forms of the Gospel itself should be spread over the whole continent of Asia or Africa. A city is, for the time being, that point where God enthrones himself in wisdom and in power. Our cities are so many seats of God—though we might not suspect it by the fruits which they bring forth. They are the places of power. They are the centers where, if anywhere, the voice of the people is the voice of God. You can tell which God it is by what the voice of

the people is—whether it be a demoniac God, or Jehovah, the God of justice and purity. Cities, being thrones of power, their welfare cannot be too profoundly pondered, nor too anxiously sought.

No man who is a patriot, and who means to give his life for his country, can afford to be on the wrong side on the subject of the cleansing of our great cities, and of obliging them to express the best thoughts of this later period of the world. Our civilization is expressed to the world by the civilization of our cities. And it is a good thing that at last we have an illustration of the vital relations of cities, if it quickens our idea of our duties respecting them; and enlarges our idea of their functions in this great land. For America perhaps above all other countries, is the land of cities. Freedom, intelligence, order, and thrift, always develop in that direction. There are more cities in Massachusetts than there are south of Mason's and Dixon's line, in the fifteen States there. Introduce a low form of political economy, and there will be a barbarian form of morals—an old Oriental form of despotism, such as might have been in vogue as far back as when monkey ceased and man began—if such a time there ever was. Introduce antiquated economies, and cities will be few and far between, and abnormal, for the most part, but introduce the great civilizing and refining influences which peculiarly distinguish Christianity, and one of the invariable results will be the multiplication of great communities.

Men talk to you about the great mischief which arises from young men leaving the country for the city. I know that a great deal of mischief arises from this cause. And yet, talking against it is like talking against the wind. You might as well read a lesson as to the propriety of the Gulf Stream rolling up and warming England and leaving Greenland untouched. It does so, and it will do so. Cities will grow and increase in population; and it is for us to understand that effect and take heed to it, so that cities shall be the legitimate expressions of the best part of our civilization. No man is a good citizen, no man is a good patriot, no man is a good Christian, who does not care what becomes of the cities, so that his business thrives, and his family is happy. It is treason to the flag, and it is treason to that God who made the flag.

Again, *the spectacle of heroic conduct* which we have presented in all forms in this panorama of fire, gives to the world, I think, to-day, a benefit which is greater than all the loss of ruined riches. We mourn and wonder at this disaster; but I tell you, when you strike the balance on every side, you shall find that it has not been a disaster. We are richer to-day with Chicago burned, than we were last month with Chicago unburned. Not to say how many

good things have been burned up, a great many things have been burned that ought to have been burned. Not to say how many valuable things are gone, a great many things are gone which were worse than valueless.

Brethren, the tiger and the wolf and the serpent lie low in the base of the human brain. Civilization and true Christianity tame them, and keep them down; but where they are not tamed and kept down, on occasion they break out with impunity in such hideous forms that the beasts of the wilderness might well be ashamed to see how they are surpassed in horrid cruelty by bad men. I cannot conceive of anything so hideous as the stories which come to us of the rapine and cruelty and lust which appeared during the unspeakable suffering caused by that calamity, when it seemed as though God sat on his throne only to make misery. That in such an hour as that men should be only turned into fiends, that they should assault, despoil, and destroy, seems incredible. Far be it from me to say that all men are so depraved. I know they are not. Far be it from me to say that all men would become so depraved under certain circumstances. I know they would not. But there is in every one some tendency to evil. There is in every one, lying in their lair, the bear and the tiger. The wickedness of man knows no bounds; and if it were unrestrained by laws, and it had the opportunity, it would leap out and be as cruel as the fires that desolated the city of Chicago.

But, comparatively speaking, such monsters were few. The vast majority of the men, women, and children there, presented other aspects. Over against this picture, like a rainbow upon a storm-cloud, hangs an example of heroic bravery. How many instances there were of singular disinterestedness! Oh, that there might have been a diamond pen to catch up the sweet thoughts of self-forgetfulness, and of noble preference one toward another! How many men that in their ordinary lives had esteemed their own good better than that of others, learned to esteem the good of others better than their own! How many dropped the material treasures which they were bearing to places of safety, for the sake of saving human life! How many mothers joyfully suffered that their children might not suffer! How many men turned with tears of gratitude, saying to God, "I thank thee, O Lord, that my wife and children are yet saved to me," though they lost everything else that they possessed! In the midst of that great whirl and tornado of fire, what glorious instances, what magnificent exhibitions, what heroic achievements, were seen! There were more than we know; but not more than angels know. There was a blessed harvest of good, as well as a hideous harvest

of evil, which resulted from this disaster. How many men there were who seemed to be drudges all their life, intensely addicted to money, and even close-handed and sharp, but who, under this trial of fire, were saved, so as by fire, and burst up into their better self!

How glorious a spectacle, also, is presented, of *the reinvigoration of enterprise*—of the rekindling of hope. Men are digging through the fire, to-day, to lay hot foundations. There may be despair in individual instances; but hope is the characteristic of that community. Manhood rises triumphant in Chicago to-day. Not that I think that the best things for a city are restored pavements, and re-erected warehouses, and nobler and better built granaries; not that I think that houses, and shops, and offices, and stores, are the best crop; but I think that when men who were rich and strong, finding themselves poor as poverty itself, rose elated, and began to build again, the manhood which they manifested was better than the streets, though paved with gold, and all the warehouses, though filled with diamonds. And the spectacle of manhood which is thus being presented, is making the whole nation richer.

When Farragut drove past hidden and obvious dangers, up the bay into the port of Mobile, the example of heroic manhood which he exhibited was a treasure to the human race which no man can measure. It lifted up before the eyes of men a higher ideal of heroism and self-consecration to duty. And where a whole community of men, who have been known as headlong in enterprise, as almost reckless in speculation, were visited by this sweeping judgment, which paralyzed and bewildered those even a thousand miles distant who looked upon it, stand up again after this raging fire, brave and strong, their exhibition of manhood is incalculable in its benefit to the whole human family. It is a treasure to Asia, and may awake even her sluggish life. It is a treasure to Europe. It is a treasure wherever men care for and think about men. And tens of thousands of youth will be more than they would have been if it were not for this heroism. Men in ranks, by hundreds, communities of men, will be nobler and more courageous for having beheld such a spectacle. Burn, buildings! go down, churches! that we may see what lies beyond you. What the church has bred, and what the family has nourished, we see when the church is gone and the house has perished, and nothing is left but the men that have been made in them.

The conduct of the whole nation at this time of the special trouble of Chicago, is also full of moral riches. (By and by you will think I see so much profit in the burning of Chicago that another city had better be burned! but no, we will leave that to the inscrutable providence of God.) For one, I am determined not

to look over the ruins of Chicago and shed any more tears, nor to whine, but to participate in the valorous spirit of the citizens there, and see what there is that is good. They will rake in the ashes and find more treasure than many and many a man found before. I see a great national blessing in this event. Before the fire was quenched trains loaded with provisions bore relief to the sufferers. No man went more than twelve hours hungry. Two hundred thousand men waked after the fire not knowing where to get a loaf, and not one perished. Soon all needed provision was at hand. All the ovens of Ohio were brought into requisition. All the granaries of the West, and all the wardrobes of the East, were thrown open. Every man said in his heart, "This is my trouble"; and every man sent from the children's little stock, and from his own and his wife's wardrobe; and selfishness itself grew benevolent; and sympathy converted itself into succor. Night and day, fire and steam did the work of humanity, and are doing it. There never was a sublimer spectacle than the scope and organization and instantaneousness of the movements for supplying the wants of the sufferers at Chicago. The nation said, "She is our city, and it is our business to succor her." A mother hardly turns more suddenly at the cry of her child with pain, than Chicago was succored when she cried out in her distress, by the mother-bosom and the mother-arm of the nation. And it is a good thing. It is worth all the money that has been lost to see the nation, with outbreking sympathy, thus taking care of its suffering ones. The exhibition is glorious. Not undervaluing creeds, I believe that they might spread all over the world and not carry a true religion with them. I believe that there might be a church on every square mile of the globe, and Christ not be known. The evidence that Christianity is spreading, is that there is a self-denying, disinterested love. And how has it shown itself in this outburst of generous feeling! We have been preaching, and preaching and preaching the brotherhood of man; and I hope some good has been done. We have been laboring and laboring to efface the dividing walls which lie between sects in general; we have been striving to harmonize the community so that they should feel that they were members one of another in all their interests; and I hope with some success. But this marvel which men call a disaster has been wrought, this pillar of fire which leads the nation in darkness has been kindled by the hand of God; and what do we see to-day? The churches and the theaters are both on the same errand; they are both doing the same thing; they are both working for the same object—the relief of those who are suffering. God bless the theaters as long as they do such work, and only such work as that! I will not apply it all through; but we will not look too closely. We

will take what we can get that is good. The Catholic and the Protestant have forgotten the Council of Trent, and before and after, and every man feels that he is more than a Catholic or a Protestant. He is a *man*. And all stand in the higher sphere of manhood to-day.

I see stores vying with each other in this good work. Banks, that are corporations, which are said to have no souls, have something that looks very much like a soul. Insurance companies that are not obliged to pay too heavily, because they have been mulcted in insurance, are stepping forward with their thousands or tens of thousands of dollars to relieve the wants of the sufferers. The whole organization of society seems to be inspired with the blood of true Christian charity. The hand, the foot, every particle of the corporate body, is thinking how to help and how to give. There is many a man in New York who will give more than he can afford, there are many who will pinch themselves of the luxuries of life all winter, for the sake of helping those whom they never have seen, and whom they never will see. They have said "Good-by" to their money, and they have seen the last of it. And is it not worth while to have had such a disaster, that we might be brought together, not by the insane fury of war, not by the selfish zeal which inspires parties in great political contests, not by those influences which come with commerce, but by the highest and sublimest manifestation—even by that which brought the Son of God from heaven to earth, that he might pour the abundance of his riches upon our poverty, and that he might make us what he is, by lifting us up into his righteousness. All the nation, in this way, blindly, imperfectly, but willingly and heartily, is attempting to bear the balm of consolation and relief to the sufferers in that stricken city. And I say that that spectacle is worth more than all the treasures of Chicago. We could not have afforded not to have had her burned.

But it does not stop here. It is quite natural that our Government should command General Sheridan to place every tent and every blanket in the West at the disposal of the sufferers. It is very natural that car-loads of provisions should roll toward Chicago. The Government did right, if there was no law for it. There are cases which laws are not made to meet, and this is one of them. But when Her Majesty's authorities of Great Britain emptied the magazines in Canada of blankets that belonged to the Imperial Government, and sent them over the border, that touched my heart. Ah! there is more in those blankets to hold Canada to our hearts, and to draw Great Britain to us, than in all the muskets and artillery of the British Government. Great Britain touched deep chords within us during

the war, when, in the midst of our trials, she withheld sympathy from us and gave it to our enemies ; but her conduct now toward our unfortunate countrymen at the West is touching another set of chords. And when, through its Mayor, London sends a thousand guineas (thank God that there is one city that has a thousand guineas to send, and whose treasury is not emptied) ; when the great mercantile firms of Great Britain sent liberal contributions ; yea, when France, thrice smitten and desolated by war, is beginning to send back some of that benefaction which we sent her in her distress ; when Germany, from whose loins we sprang, and of our descent from whom may we always be proud, through her Exchange joins in this good work ; yes, when Austria, and the Danube and the Black Sea, and even oppressed Hungary, who has not forgotten our care of her exiles, recognize this mission of charity, the spectacle is one which cannot fail to excite the admiration and gratitude of all good men. The whole world is moved by one thought and feeling to-day. The drum stops, and the heart beats. Such is the music to which we are now marching. And are there in these facts only tears and doleful lamentations ? Cannot Christian people see reason for anything but sorrow in the events which have just taken place and are now taking place at Chicago ? What is the use of being Christians, if we have no better glass with which to read the providences of God than worldly men have ? Are you no better for being a Christian ? I admit the disaster and the sufferings on the one side ; and I see benefits that will come from them on the other. I think Chicago will be a better city than ever before. And I think the true policy would be to rebuild it speedily. If the States of the West would furnish twenty millions, and forty millions, and New York should say, "Whatever capital you want to rebuild that city you shall have," it would be a gift, not to Chicago alone but to the nation and to the world. At this time of great national disaster, it seems to me that communities might rise to a higher plane, and manifest more genuine sympathy and kindness, than they ordinarily do ; but if selfishness were only wise, if selfishness but knew its interest, it would learn that sympathy is better for selfishness than selfishness itself.

Look, then, upon this great catastrophe of our times in this light. I should be ashamed if I felt obliged to follow up this discourse with anything like an urgent and imperative entreaty for you to make your contribution to this object. Many of the gentlemen connected with this church and society have already contributed with a degree of liberality which has made me proud of them. They did not put their names in the papers for the sake of having them

bruited and advertised ; but I was glad to see them ; and others I knew had given with equal liberality whose names did not appear in the public prints. Thousands and thousands, I may say tens of thousands of dollars, have already been given by this church and congregation ; but they were given in other relations ; and it is befitting that as a church we should express our sympathy with the suffering citizens of Chicago, without regard to sect or denomination, and also express our desire to have part and lot in the rebuilding upon the ruins of this great disaster.

Do not think that the tide is becoming so deep that the wants of the sufferers are supplied, and more than supplied. I suppose there are from seventy-five thousand to one hundred thousand persons who will require assistance all the coming winter. Anybody who has had to do with clothing and feeding an army, will understand that to take care, for four or five months, of seventy-five thousand persons, is a gigantic task, and that a few millions of dollars will not do it. Do not be afraid, then, that you will overswell the tide.

Men and brethren, you must change your impulse into a principle, and organize yourselves, as I am thankful that the ladies are doing, into a permanent source of relief. There is need for all that you can do in the way of clothing the naked and feeding the hungry.

So, then, what you give to-day is not the whole, it is but the beginning, of the stream of charity which will flow through all the winter, and change it, to many thousand hearts, into spring and summer.

There is not a child here so poor that God will not bless his penny. Do not be afraid to give because you are poor. Give as God has prospered you. And let me say more than that : though you have given elsewhere, remember that sorrow comes back every morning, and let your bounty repeat itself. It will not hurt you. Music consists, not in a single note, but in a succession of notes. Play a tune, then, by your benevolence.

Let me say, further, that as you are prudent men, and do not carry in your pockets so much money as it is proper that you should give on an occasion like this, you are requested to hand in, on a slip of paper, your name and residence, and the amount that you will contribute, and we will see that you are found out, and relieved of the trouble of coming to pay it.*

* The amount contributed was \$5,000.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Almighty God, we lift ourselves up from darkness, from weakness, and from uncertainty, and take great delight in beholding thee. And yet thou art formless, and our thoughts cannot compass thee. We know not how to describe what thou art to our own thought, for thou art forever changing, and yet art unchangeable. Thou art coming to us in all our moods and necessities differently; and yet, thou art the same God, yesterday, to-day and forever—always true, always just, always pure, always loving. But with how many inflections dost thou make love to appear to us—sometimes in great tenderness; sometimes in chastisements; sometimes in healing mercies; in restraint to-day, and in blessed impulsion to-morrow. In how many ways dost thou inspire in us the thought of divine justice, and create in us a spirit of love and mercy! When we are in great despondency, thou art a God that bends over and stoops to us. Even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, so dost thou gather to thee those who need shelter and protection. In the times of our triumph, when all things about us are full of brightness, thou art full of sympathy, and we look up to thee no longer as coming in pity to us, but as pointing to the way of higher things, and inspiring us, as with regal ambition, to be as the sons of God, and saying, Count yourselves to be sons of God, and walk worthy of your vocation. Thou dost draw near to us in our hours of solitude and silence, and commune with us. And as a friend, thou art full of the gentleness of friendship. Thou dost come in our hours of despondency and darkness. And oh! how wondrous is the whisper, then, of encouragement and mercy, with which thou dost cheer us, and lift us out of gloom, so that we feel, Not unto us, not unto us: the mainspring of hope is of God.

We rejoice that thus with infinite versatility thou art distilling thyself upon the hearts that need thee; and that yet thou art unchanged; that thou art the same God that the patriarchs loved and revered; that thou art the same God that the prophets worshiped in their stormy career: the same God that the disciples knew and the apostles taught; the same God to whom our fathers looked for succor. And as thou didst guide them, so thou wilt guide us their children.

And now we pray that we may have inspired in us the strength which comes, not from a consciousness of our own power, nor of our own riches, nor of our own helpfulness, but from thee. May we glory in the Lord. May we be strong in the Lord. May we rejoice in the Lord, and be filled. May we have so supreme a rest and confidence in thee that we shall be able to say, If God be for us, who can be against us? or, What can be against us? May the thought of the treasure which we have in thee, of our preciousness in thy sight, lift us above fear, and confusion, and bewilderment, and the disasters which are transpiring so constantly in human life. May we not fear life, nor death, nor poverty, nor distress. May we not fear anything outside of ourselves. But may we have a sovereign fear of wrong. May we be so full of sensitiveness, and so full of watchfulness, that we shall be shielded from every other intrusive fear. In the Lord may we find a refuge—a door—and fly higher than man can reach, and where evil thoughts cannot come to sully or defile that peace which passes all understanding.

So make us thy children inwardly. And by these most dear and sacred experiences bind our hearts together. May we run in and out before God. And may we be as the little children of parents beloved, and find our home in thy presence.

And grant, we pray thee, that more and more all that have named thy name may enter into the largeness and richness of this faith of God. Oh, grant

that this life of the soul may seem more to-day than all its knowledge—than all its attainments! In every direction may we strive more by knowledge to come to this better life and this higher sphere where thou art, and where thou mayst interpret, and where men can only be inspired.

We pray that thou wilt bless every one in thy presence this morning. Thou knowest the sorrows of all. Thou knowest their cares, their burdens, their repentances, their remorse. Thou knowest their despondency and despair. All these things have been in thy experience. Thou hast not sinned; and yet thou hast borne the sin of the transgressor, as if it were thine own. Thou hast gone through all the horror that the human soul knows. Such was the darkness of thine experience that thou didst cry out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Thou didst suffer on earth for purposes of love that thou mightest be a high priest and a succor to those who are imperfect and sinful, and need thee. And oh, how many there are that need thee this morning! Wilt thou draw near to their hearts. See how poor are the offerings which they bring! Tell them that thou needest none. How imperfect is their knowledge! Tell them that thine eye pierces behind all things, and that they are naked and open before thee. How wicked is the repentance of men! How poor are their resolutions for the future! Tell them that thou wilt not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax until thou dost bring forth judgment unto victory. Art thou not the God that poor feeble, stumbling, wicked hearts need? And if there are those in thy presence who are ashamed to come to thee, or do not know how to come, or who are waiting to be better before they come, not understanding the royal secret that to be filled with suffering and sorrow is preparation enough, teach them this morning, that every heart that needs may find that which it needs in God; that every feeble one may find strength in God; that every mourner may find comfort in God; that every darkened soul may find light in God; that every one who seeks to find his way out from the wilderness into the fruitful field, and is lost in the tangled thicket, may still find thee going out to seek and to save the lost.

So work in the hearts of those who are now present that they shall be filled with gratitude and with faith and with hope and with victory. And we pray that thou wilt grant that all thy dispensations of providence may be blessed to those severally who are affected by them. May those who are in prosperity remember the days of adversity, May those who are in trouble remember the bright days that have been and shall be. May all of us live as though we were living higher and better than the things of this world. May we look forward as strangers and pilgrims more to the end of the journey than to the fare which we experience by the way. May we not disdain the flowers that spring up by our path, nor fail to pluck the fruits that grow near to our hand; and yet may no prospect, no hope of delight, stop us on the road while we are traveling back to God.

And grant thy blessing to rest upon all those who are sick. Fill with the light of thy presence the chambers of weariness and of pain. Give the power of consolation to those who would console. And grant that the ministration of thy servants everywhere, who seek to make known Jesus Christ as the very fountain of life to those who are in trouble, may be blessed of God. May they be taught how to teach, and how to inspire the truth.

And we pray, O Lord, that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest on the labors of thy servants in the Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes; in houses of the sick, and the poor, and the ignorant; in prisons and hospitals; in ships and in shops. Wherever their hand seeks to do good, may they find thee present with them, causing flowers to spring up and blossom in their path.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest on all thy churches to-day. Fill them with thine own presence. May the precious love of God

through Jesus Christ be such as to fill every heart, and every mouth that shall speak. And may the Gospel indeed become good news again. May it cease from being a sound of war. More and more let the preaching of the Gospel be of the higher things which belong to the eternal estate of the human soul.

And we pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest on our whole land. Remember it in all its parts. Remember those who have been enslaved, but who are now free, and are seeking slowly and doubtfully their way to intelligence and truth and virtue and religion. Inspire the hearts of those around about them with more true Christian zeal to love and labor for the poor and the outcast.

We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt remember any who have taken their lives in their hands, and gone forth suffering obloquy and shame, to dwell among the benighted, and to inspire and cheer them. Wherever they are may they find that they are not a hand-breadth from thee. And though they be in solitude, may they feel that God is always speaking with them and within them. May their lives be precious, may their labor be long, and may the fruit thereof be abundant. And we pray that there may be more and more willing to do as thou didst, who, though rich, for our sakes became poor, that through thy poverty we might become rich.

Remember especially that great city on whom thou hast laid thy burning hand. Grant, we beseech of thee, as thou hast shown the sovereignty of thy power and thy wonder-working providence, what time thou didst permit the elements of nature, as thy ministers, to go forth to destruction, so again to draw back thy hand and reach it forth as thou hast been accustomed to do full of bounties and mercies, distilling them as the dews of the night and the morning. And grant that the foundations may be builded again, and that fairer homes may spring up in the places of those that are gone, and that new temples may resound with gratitude and praise where the old ones stood.

Strengthen, especially, the hands of thy servants, that they may never doubt thee, that hope may ride triumphant over despondency, and that courage may utterly drive away fear.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt sanctify that great sympathy which thou hast been pleased to create in this nation toward the despoiled. May it be a means of grace to those that send it forth, and draw closer and closer the bonds of unity between all the parts of this land, and between all the nations of the earth. Oh, let the spirit of brotherhood begin to triumph! How long shall the world be governed by force? How long shall it be governed by authority? How long shall it be under the sway of the despotic human will? When wilt thou arouse them who are asleep in their own higher and better nature, in their diviner self, so that they shall rise in the plenitude of their power, and begin to love God, and to love one another, and find that the love of God dispossesses cruelty, and casts out selfishness, and expunges from the wretchedness of the world all that dark lore of sorrow which thus far has blotted the pages of history?

O Lord our God, when wilt thou come to fulfill thy promises? How slow are thy promises! Who art thou that dost hide thyself when the whole earth goes groaning and travailing in pain, through ages? When wilt thou unwrap thy face and shine forth? O thou with whom have been the thunder and the lightning, O thou with whom is the summer, and the sweet calm and dear delight of ages, come. We have had thy winter, we have tasted some of thy spring: bring to us the everlasting summer—the summer of a thousand years.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

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